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Project Brief:

Integrated Natural Resources Management in Watersheds of Georgia is USAID funded 4-year Program implemented by GLOWS' Consortium: The Integrated Natural Resource Management in Watersheds of Georgia (INRMW) Program is developing and implementing a practical and scalable model for watershed planning and management that brings tangible benefits to communities and contributes to the sustainable development of Georgia's economy. Lessons learned from the program will motivate reforms and actions in natural resource management sectors such as potable water supply, ecosystem protection, energy supply, and agriculture.

Partners:



Florida International Representative (FIU)



UNESCO Institute of Water Education
(UNESCO –IHE)



CARE International in the Caucasus



Winrock International (WI)



Caucasus Environmental NGO Network (CENN)



Issue: Georgia is a country rich in natural resources, but the condition of the country's resources has suffered in the absence of clear environmental laws, regulations and policy governing pollution and natural resource conservation, poor law enforcement and unsustainable natural resource use practices. Many surface waters are severely polluted, forests are illegally logged and grasslands are overgrazed. Inappropriate irrigation and agricultural practices have degraded large areas of arable land through erosion and salinization of soils. Apart from this, the country is under the serious risk of natural disasters, which is enhanced by climate change impacts. Therefore, many communities, ecosystems, and economic sectors in Georgia are highly vulnerable to natural disasters.



Vashlovani and Greater Caucasus Range, Georgian Tourism Association, September 2008

In order to improve the environmental situation, Georgia has implemented a number of actions in recent years. Specifically, state financing of the environmental sector has increased markedly since 2003, improving law enforcement significantly, enhancing management effectiveness of protected areas across the country, and ameliorating drinking water supply and municipal waste collection in cities of Georgia. In the area of law and policy development, a number of important initiatives were carried out or are under implementation and a set of important legal and policy documents are being prepared, including a unified environmental code, waste and water legislation, a sustainable finance plan for the

protected areas system, and the second National Environmental Action Plan for Georgia. In addition, the government plans to develop a National Adaptation Program for Action (NAPA) and Low Emission Development Strategy (LEDS). Regardless of this, the country faces a number of acute environmental problems that require short to long-term solutions. Therefore, such issues as drinking water safety, potable water supply to rural communities and small towns, land degradation, biodiversity loss, illegal waste dumping and other persist as key environmental concerns in Georgia.

Objectives and Goals: INRMW's primary goal is to improve the current and future lives of people in Georgia by utilizing and managing natural resources more sustainably, including water, soil, vegetation, and the ecosystem that encompass them. This will be accomplished by:

Objective 1: Reducing threats to natural resource sustainability in targeted watersheds by introducing innovative approaches and practical models of participatory integrated natural resources management.

Objective 2: Empowering local communities and authorities by promoting local governance mechanisms that enable rural people to advocate for change that will better their lives.

Objective 3: Achieving tangible results in behavior change of women and men that visibly illustrate the linkages between ecosystem services and human benefits.

Objective 4: Increasing capacity for integrated and adaptive natural resources management at community, municipal, regional, and national levels by developing knowledge and skills and by improving management tools within key institutions.

Objective 5: Catalyzing more widespread implementation of integrated natural resource management by raising public awareness and supporting the development of more enabling policy and institutional frameworks.

Implementation and Large Impact: Activities of the INRMW Program engage governmental, civil, and private sector stakeholders to build capacity and transfer knowledge. The initial activities include collection of information on the Rioni, Alazani and Iori River basins, a definition of the scope of activities, and the selection of four watersheds for detailed interventions. The program partners, in coordination with relevant authorities, will conduct a series of inter-related detailed assessments emphasizing potable water systems, energy sources and use, climate change vulnerability, and risk of natural disaster.

The methodology applies well-established international standards adapted to the political, social, and biophysical conditions of Georgia. The program will also offer small grants to 20-40 communities to improve natural resource management, reduce threats of resource degradation, improve adaptation to climate change, improve energy efficiency, and increase community social and economic welfare.

Information gathered throughout this program will become the basis of a nationwide awareness raising campaign. Project accomplishments will be published and seminars will be organized to disseminate information.

About GLOWS: *GLOWS (Global Water for Sustainability) is a consortium led by Florida International University (FIU), that implements the USAID funded Program to increase social, economic, and environmental benefits to people through provision of water supply and sanitation services, healthy aquatic ecosystems and sustainable water resources management. Launched in early 2005, GLOWS works on-the-ground to implement improved practices, build local capacity through multi-level training activities, and share lessons learned and advancements in IWRM practice with local and global partners. For more information on the Georgia INRMW project or other GLOWS efforts around the world, please visit www.globalwaters.net.*